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R 201730Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2847
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0088
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1555

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 000403

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/17/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [UN](#) [IV](#)
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: FOURTEENTH INTERNATIONAL
WORKING GROUP MEETING

REF: ABIDJAN 391

Classified By: PolOff Laura Taylor-Kale, Reasons 1.4 (b & d)

1.(SBU) SUMMARY: The 14th International Working Group (IWG) meeting on April 13 took place with little fanfare. Newly appointed Prime Minister Soro sought to reassure the delegates that Ivorians want the international community to remain engaged in the Ivorian peace process through elections. Brief presentations by the DPKO mission leader, the High Representative for Elections and the impartial forces raised questions about the continued role of the UN. Rather than dissolve the IWG, the delegates agreed to allow ECOWAS and the African Union to make recommendations on the continuance of the IWG to the UN Security Council. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) The International Working Group (IWG) held its 14th meeting in Abidjan April 13. The meeting was co-chaired by Ghanaian Foreign Minister Nana Akufo-Addo and Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General (ASRSG) Abou Moussa. The only minister in attendance was Ghanaian Foreign Minister Akufo-Addo. Noticeably absent was French Cooperation Minister Brigitte Girardin.

¶3. (C) Assistant Secretary General Annabi gave a brief statement on his mission to clarify the role of the UN and ONUCI in light of the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement (OPA) and the changing political landscape. Annabi, a soft-spoken diplomat, was congratulatory about the OPA and the work of Burkinabe President Compaore in brokering the deal. He noted the demonstrated political will of the two sides and the important role of the UN in addressing technical and security issues in the lead up to elections. From his talks with the President and high level government officials, he stated his belief that the government wants the UN's help in supporting the peace process (despite President Gbagbo's clear desire to limit the SRSG's and HRE's role in shaping the political dynamic in the country. See reftel.)

¶4. (C) Newly-appointed Prime Minister Soro highlighted the spirit of compromise embodied in the OPA, noting that the New Forces entered the direct dialogue because it was in their interest to end the war and restore order to the lives of their populations. Soro outlined the three important questions that the direct dialogue clarified for the NF: the identification of undocumented Ivorians and the systematic deliverance of ID cards to millions of Ivorians as well as voter registration; a transparent electoral process; and the integration of the two armies. In answers to questions posed by the African Union and French representatives, Soro sought to reassure the delegates that Ivorians want and need the support of the international community. Soro appeared taken aback by the questions and noted that asking such questions incorrectly implies that there was an attempt to marginalize

the international community by having the direct dialogue. "You should be with us until the end of the process -- that is, until elections are over," Soro said. He noted that the OPA underlined "our attachment to the other accords and resolutions." Soro said that "we assumed that (in the OPA) the UN would continue its support and that there is no question of eliminating the IWG." Soro noted that the continued role of the international community would be addressed through communication between President Gbagbo and the Secretary General.

¶5. (SBU) High Representative for Elections (HRE) Gerard Stoudman and the commanders of UN and Licorne troops all gave very brief presentations. Stoudman said there was little to report as the new government is still in transition and just settling in. He noted that while 200 judges for the audience foraines still need to be appointed and deployed, the infrastructure does not exist yet to set up the courts throughout the country. In follow up questions about the role of the HRE, Assistant Secretary General Annabi confirmed that the role of the HRE is on the agenda in New York but it had not been discussed in initial meetings with President Gbagbo (see reftel). The commanders of the impartial forces emphasized a need to remain vigilant since complete trust does not exist between the two sides.

¶6. (SBU) The general sentiment as expressed by the South Africans was to bring the IWG to an end, but the Ghanaians felt the future of the IWG should be decided by the UNSC based on the recommendations of the African Union and ECOWAS. It was decided that the two co-chairs would consult the leaders of ECOWAS and the African Union. No announcement was made for the date of the next IWG meeting.

¶7. (C) Comment: We believe we may have seen the last IWG, since it is likely ECOWAS and the AU will propose abolishing the group. Given the probable end of the IWG, the role of the HRE and the UNSYG will take on added importance, despite President's efforts to marginalize them.

¶8. (C) Based on comments made at the IWG, it seems as if both Soro and Annabi are either naQve about President Gbagbo's intention to marginalize the international community's role in Cote d'Ivoire, or are attempting resist the President's efforts through public diplomacy. Annabi, however, did not strike us as a particularly forceful interlocutor, a weakness in this environment. We believe that a rapid decision on a new SRSG by UNSYG Moon is imperative. End Comment
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